



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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1,242 to 2,314 young persons are experiencing homelessness or housing instability in Bernalillo County

Continuum of services and resources tailored for young people are essential

Albuquerque, NM, February XX, 2022 - A new report from the Southwest Center of the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE Southwest) estimates that 1242 to 2314 young people 15-25 are experiencing homelessness or housing instability in Bernalillo County.

The *Comprehensive Needs Assessment of Young People Experiencing Housing Instability and Homelessness in Bernalillo County, New Mexico*, conducted between May-October 2021, assessed perspectives and recommendations for improvements from young people, and organizational and system stakeholders.

The Assessment incorporated a youth and young adult count; surveys with young people, organizational leaders, and the workforce; interviews with young people, system leaders, and administrators of community-based organizations; and focus groups with frontline providers.

Report co-author, Dr. Cathleen Willging, said, "The *Comprehensive Needs Assessment* helps us understand the priorities, experiences, and needs of young people experiencing homelessness, frontline providers, and organizational and systems leaders to strengthen community response to youth homelessness and to prevent it."

Key recommendations from the Assessment include:

- Prioritize youth voice
- Align leadership across public sectors, systems, and community-based organizations
- Build public awareness of local services and supports
- Provide early engagement and intervention services
- Strengthen coordinated entry and assessment systems
- Coordinate services across providers
- Provide multiple housing options
- Deliver services responsive to people with traumatic experiences and specific developmental needs
- Provide behavioral health, education, and employment services
- Address legal, bureaucratic, and structural barriers
- Assure longer-term funding to build stable services
- Enhance expertise in youth homelessness in organizations that serve adults in the community.

The system that provides services and support to young people experiencing homelessness is reliant on its knowledgeable, dedicated, and compassionate workforce.

Assata Zerai, Leadership Team member, Youth Housing Continuum Co-Chair, and UNM Vice President for Equity and Inclusion, noted that "the recommendations to address the needs of youth and young adults experiencing homelessness are focused in 4 areas: collaboration and partnership, prevention and a coordinated entry system, enhanced continuum of services and supports, and improved capacity to deliver services."

Commented [CW1]: We are told there are too many quotes but may want to include one from state, county, or city person on strengthening the system's ability to meet the needs of young people experiencing homelessness through a well-planned continuum of care.

Diana Lopez, Leadership Team member and Vice President of Youth Development, Inc, stated, “The youth and young adults who participated in the needs assessment were clear that they prefer housing with formal supports like case management, basic life skills, and behavioral health care.”

Brooke Tafoya, Leadership Team member and CEO of New Day Family & Youth Services, said, “It is critically important that the system for young people experiencing housing instability and homelessness be informed by youth voices and their experiences.”

CYFD person xx stated, “CYFD is committed to maximizing existing housing resources for young people and working with public and private partners to increase housing for young people in Bernalillo County and statewide that is tailored to young people and the needs and preferences they have identified.”

The Executive Summary of the Comprehensive Needs Assessment and youth count with recommendations can be found [here: \(place link\)](#)

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